

ACTIVITIES FOR INFANTS 4–8 MONTHS OLD

Put a windup toy beside or behind your baby. Watch to see if your baby searches for the sound.	Give your baby a spoon to grasp and chew on. It's easy to hold and feels good in the mouth. It's also great for banging, swiping, and dropping.	While sitting on the floor, place your baby in a sitting position inside your legs. Use your legs and chest to provide only as much support as your baby needs. This allows you to play with your baby while encouraging independent sitting.	Gently rub your baby with a soft cloth, a paper towel, or nylon. Talk about how things feel (soft, rough, slippery). Lotion feels good, too.	Let your baby see him- or herself in a mirror. Place an unbreakable mirror on the side of your baby's crib or changing table so he or she can watch. Look in the mirror with your baby, too. Smile and wave at your baby.
Make your own crib gym. Attach kitchen tools (measuring spoons and cups, potato masher or whips, shaker cup with a bell inside) to yarn tied across your baby's crib. Place the crib gym where your baby can kick it. <i>Take it down when your baby is not playing.</i> Always supervise.	Play voice games. Talk with a high or low voice. Click your tongue. Whisper. Take turns with your baby. Repeat any sounds made by him or her. Place your baby so you are face to face—your baby will watch as you make sounds.	Fill a small plastic bottle (medicine bottle with child-proof cap) with beans or rice. Let your baby shake it to make noise.	Make another shaker using bells. Encourage your baby to hold one in each hand and shake them both. Watch to see if your baby likes one sound better than another.	Place your baby on his or her tummy with favorite toys or objects around but just slightly out of reach. Encourage him or her to reach out for toys and move toward them.
Fill an empty tissue box with strips of paper. Your baby will love pulling them out. (Do not use colored newsprint or magazines; they are toxic. Never use plastic bags or wrap.)	Safely attach a favorite toy to a side of your baby's crib, swing, or cradle chair for her or him to reach and grasp. Change toys frequently to give her or him new things to see and do.	Place your baby in a chair or carseat, or prop him or her up with pillows. Bounce and play with a flowing scarf or a large bouncing ball. Move it slowly up, then down or to the side, so your baby can follow movement with his or her eyes.	With your baby lying on his or her back, place a toy within sight but out of reach, or move a toy across your baby's visual range. Encourage him or her to roll to get the toy.	Play Peekaboo with hands, cloth, or a diaper. Put the cloth over your face first. Then let your baby hide. Pull the cloth off if your baby can't. Encourage her or him to play. Take turns.
Place your baby in a chair or carseat to watch everyday activities. Tell your baby what you are doing. Let your baby see, hear, and touch common objects. You can give your baby attention while getting things done.	Place your baby on your knee facing you. Bounce her or him to the rhythm of a nursery rhyme. Sing and rock with the rhythm. Help your baby bring his or her hands together to clap to the rhythm.	Your baby will like to throw toys to the floor. Take a little time to play this "go and fetch" game. It helps your baby to learn to release objects. Give baby a box or pan to practice dropping toys into.	Once your baby starts rolling or crawling on his or her tummy, play "come and get me." Let your baby move, then chase after her and hug her when you catch her.	Place your baby facing you. Your baby can watch you change facial expressions (big smile, poking out tongue, widening eyes, raising eyebrows, puffing or blowing). Give your baby a turn. Do what your baby does.

ACTIVITIES FOR INFANTS 8–12 MONTHS OLD

Let your baby feed her- or himself. This gives your baby practice picking up small objects (cereal, cooked peas) and also gives him experience with textures in his hands and mouth. Soon your baby will be able to finger feed an entire meal.	Your baby will be interested in banging objects to make noise. Give your baby blocks to bang, rattles to shake, or wooden spoons to bang on containers. Show your baby how to bang objects together.	A good pastime is putting objects in and out of containers. Give your baby plastic containers with large beads or blocks. Your baby may enjoy putting socks in and out of the sock drawer or small cartons (Jell-O, tuna or soup cans) on and off shelves.	Mirrors are exciting at this age. Let your baby pat and poke at herself in the mirror. Smile and make faces together in the mirror.	Your baby will begin using her or his index fingers to poke. Let your baby poke at a play telephone or busy box. Your baby will want to poke at faces. Name the body parts as your baby touches your face.
Put toys on a sofa or sturdy table so your baby can practice standing while playing with the toys.	Find a big box that your baby can crawl in and out of. Stay close by and talk to your baby about what he or she is doing. "You went <i>in</i> ! Now you are <i>out</i> !"	Read baby books or colorful magazines by pointing and telling your baby what is in the picture. Let your baby pat pictures in the book.	Play hide-and-seek games with objects. Let your baby see you hide an object under a blanket, diaper, or pillow. If your baby doesn't uncover the object, just cover part of it. Help your baby find the object.	Play ball games. Roll a ball to your baby. Help your baby, or have a partner help him roll the ball back to you. Your baby may even throw the ball, so beach balls or Nerf balls are great for this game.
Turn on a radio or stereo. Hold your baby in a standing position and let your baby bounce and dance. If your baby can stand with a little support, hold her hands and dance like partners.	Play imitation games like Peekaboo and So Big. Show pleasure at your baby's imitations of movements and sounds. Babies enjoy playing the same games over and over.	Let your baby play with plastic measuring cups, cups with handles, sieves and strainers, sponges, and balls that float in the bathtub. Bath time is a great learning time.	Play Pat-a-cake with your baby. Clap his or her hands together or take turns. Wait and see if your baby signals you to start the game again. Try the game using blocks or spoons to clap and bang with.	Your baby will play more with different sounds like "la-la" and "da-da." Copy the sounds your baby makes. Add a new one and see if your baby tries it, too. Enjoy baby's early attempts at talking.
Make a simple puzzle for your baby by putting blocks or Ping-Pong balls inside a muffin pan or egg carton.	You can make another simple toy by cutting a round hole in the plastic lid of a coffee can. Give your baby wooden clothes pins or Ping-Pong balls to drop inside.	Say "Hi" and wave when entering a room with your baby. Encourage your baby to imitate. Help your baby wave to greet others. Waving "Hi" and "Bye" are early gestures.	Let your baby make choices. Offer two toys or foods and see which one your baby picks. Encourage your baby to reach or point to the chosen object. Babies have definite likes and dislikes!	New places and people are good experiences for your baby, but these can be frightening. Let your baby watch and listen and move at his or her own speed. Go slowly. Your baby will tell you when he or she is ready for more.

ACTIVITIES FOR INFANTS 12–16 MONTHS OLD

Babies love games at this age (Pat-a-cake, This Little Piggy Went to Market). Try different ways of playing the games and see if your baby will try it with you. Hide behind furniture or doors for Peekaboo; clap blocks or pan lids for Pat-a-cake.	Make puppets out of a sock or paper bag—one for you and one for your baby. Have your puppet talk to your baby or your baby's puppet. Encourage your baby to "talk" back.	To encourage your baby's first steps, hold your baby in standing position, facing another person. Have your baby step toward the other person to get a favorite toy or treat.	Give your baby containers with lids or different compartments filled with blocks or other small toys. Let your baby open and dump. Play "putting things back." This will help your baby learn how to release objects where he or she wants them.	Loosely wrap a small toy in a paper towel or facial tissue without tape. Your baby can unwrap it and find a surprise. Use tissue paper or wrapping paper, too. It's brightly colored and noisy.
Babies enjoy push and pull toys. Make your own pull toy by threading yogurt cartons, spools, or small boxes on a piece of yarn or soft string (about 2 feet long). Tie a bead or plastic stacking ring on one end for a handle.	Tape a large piece of drawing paper to a table. Show your baby how to scribble with large nontoxic crayons. Take turns making marks on the paper. It's also fun to paint with water.	Arrange furniture so your baby can work his or her way around a room by stepping across gaps between furniture. This encourages balance in walking.	Babies continue to love making noise. Make sound shakers by stringing canning rims together or filling medicine bottles (with child-proof caps) with different-sounding objects like marbles, rice, salt, bolts, and so forth. <i>Be careful to secure lids tightly.</i>	This is the time your baby learns that adults can be useful! When your baby "asks" for something by vocalizing or pointing, respond to his or her signal. Name the object your baby wants and encourage him or her to communicate again—taking turns with each other in a "conversation."
Play the naming game. Name body parts, common objects, and people. This lets your baby know that everything has a name and helps him or her begin to learn these names.	Make an obstacle course with boxes or furniture so your baby can climb in, on, over, under, and through. A big box can be a great place to sit and play.	Let your baby help you clean up. Play "feed the wastebasket" or "give it to Mommy or Daddy."	Make a surprise bag for your baby to find in the morning. Fill a paper or cloth bag with a soft toy, something to make a sound, a little plastic jar with a screw-top lid, or a book with cardboard pages.	Play "pretend" with a stuffed animal or doll. Show and tell your baby what the doll is doing (walking, going to bed, eating, dancing across a table). See if your baby will make the doll move and do things as you request. Take turns.
Cut up safe finger foods (do not use foods that pose a danger of your baby's choking) in small pieces and allow your baby to feed him- or herself. It is good practice to pick up small things and feel different textures (bananas, soft crackers, berries).	Let your baby "help" during daily routines. Encourage your baby to "get" the cup and spoon for mealtime, to "find" shoes and coat for dressing, and to "bring" the pants or diaper for changing. Following directions is an important skill for your baby to learn.	Your baby is learning that different toys do different things. Give your baby lots of things to roll, push, pull, hug, shake, poke, turn, stack, spin, and stir.	Most babies enjoy music. Clap and dance to the music. Encourage your baby to practice balance by moving forward, around, and back. Hold his or her hands for support, if needed.	Prepare your baby for a future activity or trip by talking about it beforehand. Your baby will feel a part of what is going on rather than being just an observer. It may also help reduce some fear of being "left behind."

ACTIVITIES FOR TODDLERS 16–20 MONTHS OLD

Toddlers love to play in water. Put "squeezing" objects in the bathtub, such as sponges or squeeze bottles, along with dump-and-pour toys (cups, bowls).	Toddlers are excited about bubbles. Let your toddler try to blow bubbles or watch you blow bubbles through a straw. Bubbles are fun to pop and chase, too.	Pretend play becomes even more fun at this age. Encourage your toddler to have a doll or stuffed toy do what he or she does—walk, go to bed, dance, eat, and jump. Include the doll in daily activities or games.	Make instant pudding together. Let your toddler "help" by dumping pudding, pouring milk, and stirring. The results are good to eat or can be used for finger painting.	Use boxes or buckets for your toddler to throw bean bags or balls into. Practice overhand release of the ball or bean bag.
Play Hide and Seek. Your toddler can hide with another person or by him- or herself for you to find. Then take your turn to hide and let your toddler find you.	Toddlers love movement. Take him or her to the park to ride on rocking toys, swings, and small slides. You may want to hold your toddler in your lap on the swing and on the slide at first.	Sing action songs together such as "Ring Around the Rosey," "Itsy-Bitsy Spider," and "This Is the Way We Wash Our Hands." Do actions together. Move with the rhythm. Wait for your toddler to anticipate the action.	Put favorite toys in a laundry basket slightly out of reach of your toddler or in a clear container with a tight lid. Wait for your toddler to request the objects, giving him or her a reason to communicate. Respond to his or her requests.	Your toddler may become interested in "art activities." Use large nontoxic crayons and a large pad of paper. Felt-tip markers are more exciting with their bright colors. Let your toddler scribble his or her own picture as you make one.
A favorite pull toy often is a small wagon or an old purse for collecting things. Your toddler can practice putting objects in and out of it. It can also be used to store favorite items.	Make a picturebook by putting common, simple pictures cut from magazines into a photo album. Your toddler will enjoy photos of him- or herself and family members. Pictures of pets are favorites, too.	Toddlers are interested in playing with balls. Use a beach ball to roll, throw, and kick.	Play the "What's that?" game by pointing to clothing, toys, body parts, objects, or pictures and asking your toddler to name them. If your toddler doesn't respond, name it for him or her and encourage imitation of the words.	Fill a plastic tub with cornmeal or oatmeal. Put in kitchen spoons, strainer, measuring cups, funnels, or plastic containers. Toddlers can fill, dump, pour, and learn about textures and use of objects as tools. Tasting won't be harmful.
Toddlers will begin putting objects together. Simple puzzles (separate pieces) with knobs are great. Putting keys into locks and letters into mailbox slots is fun, too.	Get two containers (coffee cups or cereal bowls) that look the same and a small toy. Hide the toy under one container while your toddler watches. Ask him or her, "Where did it go?" Eventually you can play the "old shell game."	Help your toddler sort objects into piles. He or she can help you sort laundry (put socks in one pile and shirts in another). Play "clean up" games. Have your toddler put toys on specified shelves or boxes.	Save milk cartons, Jell-O boxes, or pudding boxes. Your toddler can stack them to make towers. You can also stuff grocery bags with newspapers and tape them shut to make big blocks.	Lay out your toddler's clothes on the bed before dressing. Ask him or her to give you a shirt, pants, shoes, and socks. This is an easy way to learn the names of common items.

ACTIVITIES FOR TODDLERS 20 –24 MONTHS OLD

Toddlers enjoy looking at old pictures of themselves. Tell simple stories about her or him as you look at the pictures. Talk about what was happening when the picture was taken.	Cut a rectangular hole in the top of a shoebox. Let your toddler insert an old deck of playing cards or used envelopes. The box is easy storage for your toddler's "mail."	Set up your own bowling game using plastic tumblers, tennis ball cans, or empty plastic bottles for bowling pins. Show your toddler how to roll the ball to knock down the pins. Then let your toddler try.	Many everyday items (socks, spoons, shoes, mittens) can help your toddler learn about matching. Hold up an object, and ask if he or she can find one like yours. Name the objects while playing the game.	Hide a loudly ticking clock or a softly playing transistor radio in a room and have your child find it. Take turns by letting him or her hide and you find.
A good body parts song is "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes." Get more detailed with body parts by naming teeth, eyebrows, fingernails, and so forth.	Make your toddler an outdoor "paint" set by using a large wide paint brush and a bowl or bucket of water. Your toddler will have fun "painting" the side of the house, a fence, or the front porch.	Turn objects upside down (books, cups, shoes) and see if your toddler notices they're wrong and turns them back the right way. Your toddler will begin to enjoy playing "silly" games.	Give your toddler some of your old clothes (hats, shirts, scarves, purses, necklaces, sunglasses) to use for dress up. Make sure your toddler sees him- or herself in the mirror. Ask him or her to tell you who is all dressed up.	Use plastic farm animals or stuffed animals to tell the Old McDonald story. Use sound effects!
Make grocery sack blocks by filling large grocery sacks about half full with shredded or crumpled newspaper. Fold the top of the sack over and tape it shut. Your toddler will enjoy tearing and crumpling the paper and stuffing the sacks. The blocks are great for stacking and building. <i>Avoid newsprint contact with mouth. Wash hands after this activity.</i>	"Dress up" clothes offer extra practice for putting on and taking off shirts, pants, shoes, and socks. Toddlers can fasten big zippers and buttons.	Put small containers, spoons, measuring cups, funnels, a bucket, shovels, and a colander into a sandbox. Don't forget to include cars and trucks to drive on sand roads.	Rhymes and songs with actions are popular at this age. "Itsy-Bitsy Spider," "I'm a Little Teapot," and "Where Is Thumbkin?" are usual favorites. Make up your own using your toddler's name in the song.	Make your own playdough by mixing 2 cups flour and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup salt. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water and 2 tablespoons salad oil. Knead well until it's smooth; add food coloring, and knead until color is fully blended. Toddlers will love squishing, squeezing, and pounding the dough.
Playing beside or around other children the same age is fun but usually requires adult supervision. Trips to the park are good ways to begin practicing interacting with other children.	Play the "show me" game when looking at books. Ask your toddler to find an object in a picture. Take turns. Let your toddler ask you to find an object in a picture. Let him or her turn the pages.	Add a few Ping-Pong balls to your toddler's bath toys. Play a "pop up" game by showing your toddler how balls pop back up after holding them under the water.	Clean plastic containers with push or screw-on lids are great places to "hide" a favorite object or treat. Toddlers will practice pulling and twisting them to solve the "problem" of getting the object. Watch to see if your toddler asks you to help.	Make a book by pasting different textures on each page. Materials such as sandpaper, feathers, cotton balls, nylon, silk, and buttons lend themselves to words such as <i>rough, smooth, hard, and soft</i> .

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN 24–30 MONTHS OLD

Add actions to your child's favorite nursery rhymes. Easy action rhymes include "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush," "Jack Be Nimble," "This Is the Way We Wash Our Clothes," "Ring Around the Rosey," and "London Bridge."	Play Target Toss with a large bucket or box and bean bags or balls. Help your child count how many he or she gets in the target. A ball of yarn or rolled-up socks also work well for an indoor target game.	Wrap tape around one end of a piece of yarn to make it stiff like a needle and put a large knot at the other end. Have your child string large elbow macaroni, buttons, spoons, or beads. Make an edible necklace out of Cheerios.	Children at this age love outings. One special outing can be going to the library. The librarian can help you find appropriate books. Make a special time for reading (like bedtime stories).	Play a jumping game when you take a walk by jumping over the cracks in the sidewalk. You may have to hold your child and help him or her jump over at first.
Take time to draw with your child when he or she wants to get out paper and crayons. Draw large shapes and let your child color them in. Take turns.	During sandbox play, try wetting some of the sand. Show your child how to pack the container with the wet sand and turn it over to make sand structures or cakes.	Add an old catalog or two to your child's library. It's a good "picture" book for naming common objects.	Give your child soap, a washcloth, and a dishpan of water. Let your child wash a "dirty" doll, toy dishes, or doll clothes. It's good practice for hand washing and drying.	Make "sound" containers using plastic Easter eggs or L'eggs eggs. Fill eggs with noisy objects like sand, beans, or rice and tape the eggs shut. Have two eggs for each sound. Help your child match sounds and put them back in the carton together.
Show your child how to make snakes, balls, or roll-out pancakes with a small rolling pin using PlayDoh. Use large cookie cutters to make new Play-Doh shapes.	Children at this age love to pretend and really enjoy it when you can pretend with them. Pretend you are different animals, like a dog or cat. Make animal sounds and actions. Let your child be the pet owner who pets and feeds you.	Your child will begin to be able to make choices. Help her or him choose what to wear each day by giving a choice between two pairs of socks, two shirts, and so forth. Give choices at other times like snack or mealtime (two kinds of drink, cracker, etc.).	Enhance listening skills by playing cassettes with both slow and fast music. Songs with speed changes are great. Show your child how to move fast or slow with the music. (You might find children's cassettes at your local library.)	Children can find endless uses for boxes. A box big enough for your child to fit in can become a car. An appliance box with holes cut for windows and a door can become your child's playhouse. Decorating the boxes with crayons, markers, or paints can be a fun activity to do together.
Play "Follow the Leader." Walk on tiptoes, walk backward, and walk slow or fast with big steps and little steps.	Try a new twist to fingerpainting. Use whipping cream on a washable surface (cookie sheet, Formica table). Help your child spread it around and draw pictures with your fingers. Add food coloring to give it some color.	Action is an important part of a child's life. Play a game with a ball where you give directions and your child does the actions, such as "roll the ball." <i>Kick, throw, push, bounce, and catch</i> are other good actions. Take turns giving the directions.	Make an obstacle course using chairs, pillows, or large cartons. Tell your child to crawl over, under, through, behind, in front of, or between the objects. Be careful arranging so the pieces won't tip and hurt your child.	Collect little and big things (balls, blocks, plates). Show and describe (big/little) the objects. Ask your child to give you a big ball, then all the big balls. Do the same for <i>little</i> . Another big/little game is making yourself big by stretching your arms up high and making yourself little by squatting down.

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN 30–36 MONTHS OLD

Tell or read a familiar story and pause frequently to leave out a word, asking your child to "fill it in." For example, Little Red Riding Hood said, "Grandmother, what big _____ you have."	Teach somersaults by doing one yourself first. Then help your child do one. Let him or her try it alone. Make sure furniture is out of the way. You may want to put some pillows on the floor for safety.	Give a cup to your child. Use bits of cereal or fruit and place one in your child's cup ("one for you") and one in your cup ("one for me"). Take turns. Dump out your child's cup and help count the pieces. This is good practice for early math skills.	Put an old blanket over a table to make a tent or house. Pack a "picnic" sack for your camper. Have your child take along a pillow on the "camp out" for a nap. Flashlights are especially fun.	Get a piece of butcher paper large enough for your child to lie on. Draw around your child's body to make an outline. Don't forget fingers and toes. Talk about body parts and print the words on the paper. Let your child color the poster. Hang the poster on a wall in your child's room.
Children at this age may be interested in creating art in different ways. Try cutting a potato in half and carving a simple shape or design for your child to dip in paint and then stamp onto paper.	Add water to tempera paint to make it runny. Drop some paint on a paper and blow through a straw to move the paint around the paper, or fill an old roll-on deodorant bottle with watered-down paint. Your child can roll color onto the paper.	A good activity to learn location words is to build roads and bridges with blocks. Use toy cars to go on the road, under or over a bridge, between the houses, and so forth.	Trace around simple objects with your child. Use cups of different sizes, blocks, or your child's and your hands. Using felt-tip markers or crayons of different colors makes it even more fun.	Have your child help you set the table. First, have your child place the plates, then glasses, and then napkins. By placing one at each place, he or she will learn one-to-one correspondence. Show your child where the utensils should be placed.
Collect empty boxes (cereal, TV dinners, egg cartons) and help your child set up his or her own grocery store.	Help your child learn new words to describe objects in everyday conversations. Describe by color, size, and shape (the <i>blue</i> cup, the <i>big</i> ball). Also, describe how things move (a car goes <i>fast</i> , a turtle moves <i>slowly</i>) and how they feel (ice cream is <i>cold</i> , soup is <i>hot</i>).	Make your own puzzles by cutting out magazine pictures of whole people. Have your child help glue pictures onto cardboard. Cut pictures into three pieces by cutting curvy lines. Head, trunk, and legs make good pieces for your child to put together.	Dribble different colors of paint in the middle or on one side of a paper. Fold the paper in half. Let your child open the paper to see the design it makes.	A good game for trips in the car is to play a matching game with a set of Old Maid cards. Place a few different cards in front of your child. Give him or her a card that matches one displayed and ask him or her to find the card like the one you gave him or her.
Cut pictures out of magazines to make two groups such as dogs, food, toys, or clothes. Have two boxes ready and put a picture of a dog in one and of food in the other. Have your child put additional pictures in the right box, helping him or her learn about categories.	Cut a stiff paper plate to make a hand paddle and show your child how to use it to hit a balloon. See how long your child can keep the balloon in the air or how many times he or she can hit it back to you. This activity helps develop large body and eye-hand coordination. Always carefully supervise when playing with balloons.	To improve coordination and balance, show your child the "bear walk" by walking on hands and feet, keeping the legs and arms straight. Try the "rabbit hop" by crouching down and then jumping forward.	Encourage your child to try the "elephant walk," bending forward at the waist and letting your arms (hands clasped together) swing freely while taking slow and heavy steps. This is great to do with music.	Make a poster of your child's favorite things using pictures from old magazines. Use safety scissors and paste or a glue stick to allow your child to do it independently, yet safely.

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN 36 – 48 MONTHS OLD

Make a book "about me" for your child. Save family pictures, leaves, magazine pictures of a favorite food, and drawings your child makes. Put them in a photo album, or glue onto sheets of paper and staple together to make a book.	Make a bird feeder using peanut butter and bird seed. Help your child find a pine cone or a piece of wood to spread peanut butter on. Roll in or sprinkle with seeds and hang in a tree or outside a window. While your child watches the birds, ask her about the number, size, and color of the different birds that visit.	Grow a plant. Choose seeds that sprout quickly (beans or peas), and together with your child place the seeds in a paper cup, filling almost to the top with dirt. Place the seeds $\frac{1}{2}$ inch under the soil. Put the cup in a sunny windowsill and encourage your child to water and watch the plant grow.	Before bedtime, look at a magazine or children's book together. Ask your child to point to pictures as you name them, such as "Where is the truck?" Be silly and ask him to point with his elbow or foot. Ask him to show you something that is round or something that goes fast.	Play a matching game. Find two sets of 10 or more pictures. You can use pictures from two copies of the same magazine or a deck of playing cards. Lay the pictures face up and ask your child to find two that are the same. Start with two picture sets and gradually add more.
While cooking or eating dinner, play the "more or less" game with your child. Ask who has <i>more</i> "potatoes" and who has <i>less</i> . Try this using same-size glasses or cups, filled with juice or milk.	Cut out some large paper circles and show them to your child. Talk with your child about things in her world that are "round" (a ball, the moon). Cut the circle in half, and ask her if she can make it round again. Next, cut the circle into three pieces, and so forth.	During bath time, play Simon Says to teach your child names of body parts. First, you can be "Simon" and help your child wash the part of his body that "Simon says." Let your child have a turn to be "Simon," too. Be sure to name each body part as it is washed and give your child a chance to wash himself.	Talk about the number 3. Read stories that have 3 in them (<i>The Three Billy Goats Gruff</i> , <i>Three Little Pigs</i> , <i>The Three Bears</i>). Encourage your child to count to 3 using similar objects (rocks, cards, blocks). Talk about being 3 years old. After your child gets the idea, move up to the numbers 4, 5, and so forth as long as your child is interested.	Put out several objects that are familiar to your child (brush, coat, banana, spoon, book). Ask your child to show you which one you can eat or which one you wear outside. Help your child put the objects in groups that go together, such as "things that we eat" and "things that we wear."
When your child is getting dressed, encourage her to practice with buttons and zippers. Play a game of Peek-a-boo to show her how buttons go through the holes. Pretend the zipper is a choo-choo train going "up and down" the track.	Practice following directions. Play a silly game where you ask your child to do two or three fun or unusual things in a row. For example, ask him to "Touch your elbow and then run in a circle" or "Find a book and put it on your head."	Encourage your child's "sharing skills" by making a play corner in your home. Include only two children to start (a brother, sister, or friend) and have a few of the same type of toys available so the children don't have to share all the time. Puppets or blocks are good because they encourage playing together. If needed, use an egg or oven timer with a bell to allow the children equal time with the toys.	Listen for sounds. Find a cozy spot, and sit with your child. Listen and identify all the sounds that you hear. Ask your child if it is a <i>loud</i> or <i>soft</i> sound. Try this activity inside and outside your home.	Make an adventure path outside. Use a garden hose, rope, or piece of chalk and make a "path" that goes <i>under</i> the bench, <i>around</i> the tree, and <i>along</i> the wall. Walk your child through the path first, using these words. After she can do it, make a new path or have your child make a path.
Find large pieces of paper or cardboard for your child to draw on. Using crayons, pencils, or markers, play a drawing game where you follow his lead by copying exactly what he draws. Next, encourage him to copy your drawings, such as circles or straight lines.	When reading or telling a familiar story for bedtime, stop and leave out a word. Wait for your child to "fill in the blank."	Make a necklace you can eat by stringing Cheerios or Froot Loops on a piece of yarn or string. Wrap a short piece of tape around the end of the string to make a firm tip for stringing.	Listen and dance to music with your child. You can stop the music for a moment and play the "freeze" game where everyone "freezes," or stands perfectly still, until you start the music again. Try to "freeze" in unusual positions for fun.	Make long scarves out of fabric scraps, old dresses, or old shirts by tearing or cutting long pieces. Use material that is lightweight. Hold on to the edge of the scarf, swirl around, run, and jump.

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN 48–60 MONTHS OLD

Play the "who, what, and where" game. Ask your child <i>who</i> works in a school, <i>what</i> is in a school, and <i>where</i> is the school. Expand on your child's answers by asking more questions. Ask about other topics, like the library, bus stop, or post office.	When you are setting the table for a meal, play the "what doesn't belong" game. Add a small toy or other object next to the plate and eating utensils. Ask your child if she can tell you what doesn't belong here. You can try this game any time of the day. For example, while brushing your child's hair, set out a brush, barrette, comb, and a "ball."	Let your child help prepare a picnic. Show him what he can use for the picnic (bread, peanut butter, and apples). Lay out sandwich bags and a lunch box, basket, or large plastic bag. Then go have fun on the picnic.	On a rainy day, pretend to open a shoe store. Use old shoes, paper, pencils, and a chair to sit down and try on shoes. You can be the customer. Encourage your child to "write" your order down. Then she can take a turn being the customer and practice trying on and buying shoes.	Play the "guess what will happen" game to encourage your child's problem-solving and thinking skills. For example, during bath time, ask your child, "What do you think will happen if I turn on the hot and cold water at the same time?" or "What would happen if I stacked the blocks to the top of the ceiling?"
Play "bucket hoops." Have your child stand about 6 feet away and throw a medium-size ball at a large bucket or trash can. For fun on a summer day, fill the bucket with water.	Write your child's name often. When he finishes drawing a picture, be sure to put his name on it and say the letters as you write them. If he is interested, encourage him to name and/or to copy the letters. Point out the letters in your child's name throughout the day on cereal boxes, sign boards, and books.	Invite your child to play a counting game. Using a large piece of paper, make a simple game board with a straight path. Use dice to determine the count. Count with your child, and encourage her to hop the game piece to each square, counting as she touches down.	Make a person with Play-Doh or clay using sticks, buttons, toothpicks, beads, and any other small items. Start with a Play-Doh (or clay) head and body and use the objects for arms, legs, and eyes. Ask your child questions about his person.	Encourage your child to learn her full name, address, and telephone number. Make it into a singing or rhyming game for fun. Ask your child to repeat it back to you when you are riding in the car or on the bus.
Cut out three small, three medium, and three large circles. Color each set of circles a different color (or use colored paper for each). Your child can sort the circles by color or by size. You can also ask your child about the different sizes. For example, ask your child, "Which one is smallest?" Try this game using the buttons removed from an old shirt.	Go on a walk and pick up things you find. Bring the items home and help your child sort them into groups. For example, groups can include rocks, paper, or leaves. Encourage your child to start a "collection" of special things. Find a box or special place where he can display his collection.	Play a picture guessing game. Cover a picture in a familiar book with a sheet of paper and uncover a little at a time until your child has guessed the picture.	Let your child help you prepare a meal. She can spread peanut butter and jelly, peel a banana, cut with a butter knife, pour cereal, and add milk (using a small container). Never give her a task involving the stove or oven without careful supervision.	"Write" and mail a letter to a friend or relative. Provide your child with paper, crayons or pencil, and an envelope. Let him draw, scribble, or write; or he can tell you what to write down. When he is finished, let him fold the letter to fit in the envelope, lick, and seal. You can write the address on the front. Be sure to let him decorate the envelope as well. After he has put the stamp on, help him mail the letter.
Play "circus." Find old, colorful clothes and help your child put on a circus show. Provide a rope on the ground for the high wire act, a box to stand on to announce the acts, fun objects for a magic act, and stuffed animals for the show. Encourage your child's imagination and creativity in planning the show. Don't forget to clap.	Take a pack of playing cards and choose four or five matching sets. Lay the cards out face up, and help your child to find the pairs. Talk about what makes the pairs of cards the "same" and "different."	Make bubbles. The recipe is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dish washing liquid (Dawn or Joy works best) and 8 cups of water. Use straws to blow bubbles on a cookie sheet. Or make a wand by stringing two pieces of a drinking straw onto a string or piece of yarn. Tie the ends of the string together to make a circle. Holding onto the straw pieces, dip the string in the bubble mixture. Pull it out and gently move forward or backward. You should see lovely, big bubbles.	Make a bean bag to catch and throw. Fill the toe of an old sock or pantyhose with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dry beans. Sew the remaining side or tie off with a rubber band. Play "hot potato" or simply play catch. Encourage your child to throw the ball overhand and underhand.	Pretend to be an animal. Encourage your child to use her imagination and become a kitty. You can ask, "What do kitties like to eat?" or "Where do kitties live?" Play along, and see how far the game can go.

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ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN 60–66 MONTHS OLD

Make a nature collage. Collect leaves, pebbles, and small sticks from outside and glue them on a piece of cardboard or stiff paper. (Cereal and cracker boxes can be cut up and used as cardboard.)	Practice writing first names of friends, toys, and relatives. Your child may need to trace the letters of these names at first. Be sure to write in large print letters.	Encourage dramatic play. Help your child act out his or her favorite nursery rhyme, cartoon, or story. Use large, old clothes for costumes.	Play simple ball games such as kick-ball. Use a large (8"–12") ball, and slowly roll it toward your child. See if your child can kick the ball and run to "first base."	When reading stories to your child, let her make up the ending, or retell favorite stories with "silly" new endings that she makes up.
Let your child help you with simple cooking tasks such as mashing potatoes, making cheese sandwiches, and fixing a bowl of cereal. Afterward, see if she can tell you the order that you followed to cook and mash the potatoes or to get the bread out of the cupboard and put the cheese on it.	Play "20 Questions." Think of an animal. Let your child ask 20 yes/no questions about the animal until he guesses what animal it is. (You may need to help him ask yes/no questions at first.) Now let your child choose an animal and you ask the 20 questions. You can also use other categories such as food, toys, and people.	You can play "license plate count-up" in the car or on the bus. Look for a license plate that begins with a 1. Then try to find other plates that begin with 2, 3, 4, and so forth, up to 10. When your child can play "count-up," play "count-down," starting with a license plate beginning with 9, then 8, 7, 6, and so forth, down to 1.	Practice pretend play or pantomime. Here are some things to act out: 1) eating hot pizza with stringy cheese; 2) winning a race; 3) finding a giant spider; 4) walking in thick, sticky mud; and 5) making footprints in wet sand.	Make a simple concentration game with two or three pairs of duplicate playing cards (two king of hearts), or make your own cards out of duplicate pictures or magazine ads. Start with two or three pairs of cards. Turn them face down and mix them up. Let your child turn two cards over and see if they match. If they don't, turn the cards face down again. You can gradually increase to playing with more pairs of cards.
Make an obstacle course either inside or outside your home. You can use cardboard boxes for jumping over or climbing through, broomsticks for laying between chairs for "limbo" (going under), and pillows for walking around. Let your child help lay out the course. After a couple of practice tries, have her complete the obstacle course as quickly as possible. Then try hopping or jumping the course.	After washing hands, practice writing letters and numbers in pudding or thinned, mashed potatoes spread on a cookie sheet or cutting board. Licking fingers is allowed!	Play mystery sock. Put a common household item in a sock. Tie off the top of the sock. Have your child feel the sock and guess what is inside. Take turns guessing what's inside.	Make color rhymes. Take turns rhyming a color and a word: blue, shoe; red, bed; yellow, fellow. You can also rhyme with names (Dad, sad; Jack, sack). Take turns with the rhyming.	Make an "I can read" poster. Cut out names your child can read—fast-food restaurant names, names from cereal cartons, and other foods. You can write your child's name, names of relatives, and names of friends on pieces of paper and put them on the poster. Add to the poster as your child learns to read more names.
Play "what doesn't belong?" Let your child find the word that doesn't belong in a list of six or seven spoken words. The one that doesn't belong can be the word that doesn't rhyme or the word that is from a different category. Some examples are 1) fly, try, by, coat, sigh, my; 2) Sam, is, ram, am, spam, ham; 3) red, orange, purple, green, yellow, beetle; 4) spoon, fork, shirt, pan, spatula, knife. Have your child give three to four words with one that doesn't belong.	Play the "memory" game. Put five or six familiar objects on a table. Have your child close her eyes. Remove one object, and rearrange the rest. Ask your child which object is missing. Take turns finding the missing object.	Make puppets out of ice cream sticks, paper bags, socks, or egg carton cups. Decorate the puppets with yarn, pens, buttons, and colored paper. Make a puppet stage by turning a coffee table or card table on its side and crouching behind the table top. Be the audience while your child puts on a puppet show.	Play the old shell game. Get four cups or glasses that you cannot see through. Find a small ball, object, or edible item such as a raisin or cracker that fits under the cups. Have your child watch as you place the object under one of the cups and move all the cups around. Have your child try to remember which cup the object is under. Have your child take a turn moving the objects while you guess.	Play "mystery sound." Select household items that make distinct sounds such as a clock, cereal box, metal lid (placed on a pan), and potato chip bag. Put a blindfold on your child and have her try to guess which object she heard. Take turns with your child.